

Written Testimony in Favor of SB 426 – Toxic Free Schools
Senate Committee on Education Public Hearing 02/21/2023

Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Stephen Lawn and I am an active community member in the City of Cottage Grove. Over the last few years, I have worked with other concerned community members to address our concerns regarding the use of pesticides at the local school properties. These efforts had mixed results depending on the Supervisor and Board members in place at the time. As we reached out to other school districts in Oregon and surrounding states, we discovered that despite the rules and good intentions, IPM programs were being implemented differently (or ignored) at the district level. I am pleased to see that the Senate Education Committee is considering the modernization of these rules with SB 246. The bill proposes the Department of Education, in collaboration with Key Stakeholders, provide the resources and technical assistance needed to properly implement an IPM plan for the protection of our children, communities and environment.

Although I understand that the bill was modified last week, I have a few specific comments on the bill as Introduced and discussed during the public hearing on 02/21/2023.

Key Stakeholders: Amended ORS 332.331. (1) includes the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) as a key stakeholder to help develop and adopt a model plan to provide guidance to the districts and schools in developing and adopting plans under this section. This is appropriate since the DEQ is the state agency responsible for the protection of the public and environment from hazardous and toxic chemicals. However, the DEQ is not included as a key stakeholder later in the bill including ORS 332.331 (8) and ORS 332.331 (9).

Importantly in Section 3 of the proposed bill, a representative of the DEQ is not included as a member of the Healthy and Safe Schools Integrated Pest Advisory Committee. I believe that the DEQ should be a named member of this advisory committee as they bring a unique and diverse perspective on the proper use and management of toxic and hazardous substances.

Preference for effective nonchemical pest suppression and exclusion strategies. This is a key component of an effective IPM program which I believe has been overlooked/ignored during pesticide application decision making at schools. I fully agree with the new wording included in ORS 332.331 (3) (g) (B) and ORS 332.331 (g) (D).

I also recommend that the pesticide control written notice requirements of ORS 634.740 include: *a description of the preferred nonchemical pest suppression and exclusion strategies identified and implemented by the IPM plan coordinator and why they failed to effectively reduce the pest population to the acceptable density levels identified in the IPM plan.*

With consideration of the above comments, I ask this committee to support SB 426. Thank you for your consideration of the efforts for Toxic Free Schools.